

OCI No. 0953/72
13 December 1972

SALT: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Moscow's concern over technological improvements in US strategic offensive systems has emerged clearly in recent plenary sessions. The Soviet proposals to date have been aimed at circumscribing all major US modernization programs except MIRV, and Soviet delegate Shchukin raised the MIRV issue at the 8 December mini-plenary. Most of the Soviet proposals have been concerned with airborne nuclear systems such as forward and carrier based aircraft, SRAM, B-1, and nuclear armed B-52s. This reflects both present and future US superiority in this area and Moscow's enormous expenditures on air defense measures. The Soviets have thus set out what they privately acknowledge to be a maximum negotiating position. This leaves the two sides far apart, although there have already been some modest hints that as the Soviets "clarify" their position the gap will be narrowed to some extent.

1. To date the Soviets have advanced seven specific proposals, calling for:

- 1) the withdrawal of ballistic missile submarines to agreed limits that are out of range of the other side, and the simultaneous liquidation of submarine bases in third countries.
- 2) the withdrawal to their national territory of all nuclear delivery aircraft and any missiles with nuclear warheads whose geographical deployment enables them to strike targets on the territory of the other side, and the liquidation of their corresponding bases in third countries.
- 3) a ban on the use of strategic bombers for delivery of nuclear weapons, including air-to-ground missiles.

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- 4) a ban on the development, testing, and deployment of new types of strategic aircraft, and limiting the sides to modernization of existing bombers, but without the right to convert them into delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons, including air-to-ground nuclear missiles.
- 5) a ban on the development, testing, and deployment of long-range air-to-ground missiles.
- 6) a ban on developing or testing any type of strategic offensive weapon that would increase the threat of nuclear war.
- 7) a ban on the development, testing, and deployment of intercontinental cruise missiles or sea-based cruise missiles specially designed to strike land targets.

Most of these points were emphasized by Soviet delegates at the mini-plenaries of 8 and 12 December.

2. In addition, Moscow is calling for both sides to exercise "restraint" in areas not limited by agreement, and not to undertake new major strategic offensive weapons programs-- which Soviet delegate Pleshakov says would include Trident, and which Shchukin says would not include the new offensive system Moscow is developing for its new silos. Soviet advisor Karpov emphasized privately on 8 December, however, that restraint would be mutual and that details could be discussed when both sides were agreed that this was an approach which held some promise.

3. On 8 December, Semenov stressed the importance of the Soviet proposal for limiting strategic aviation armaments, and stated that any setting of aggregate numbers must include US FBS and NATO-allied submarines. It was left to General Trusov to spell out the Soviet-proposed ban on development and testing of new types of weapons. He stated that "substantial elements" in the USSR were asking why the US was implementing such major new programs as accelerated Trident, B-1, SRAM, SCAD, and others, as well as proceeding with Poseidon and MM-3 deployment. He alleged that swift approval of the largest defense budget in US history at the time the interim agreement went into effect was also designed to upset the strategic balance and gain unilateral advantage.

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4. Apparently concerned that the US would not take a hint made in private earlier and raise the MIRV issue, the Soviets had delegate Shchukin bring it up on 8 December. Shchukin noted that MIRVs had been a response to ABM systems, and since ABM systems were now limited, it would be useful to return to the MIRV question. He alleged that the issue of maneuverable re-entry vehicles (MARVs) was also germane in this context, and asked for US views.

The US Position

5. The US side continues to stress that limitation of the three central systems--ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers--is the heart of strategic arms limitation and that other issues are extraneous. The US is pressing for equal aggregate levels with freedom to mix within these systems, and for equal missile throw weight, to be achieved by reductions (mostly Soviet) in present throw weight. A conversation between Garthoff and Soviet delegate Grinevsky on 8 December was able to close slightly the wide gap between the two sides. Grinevsky confirmed Garthoff's understanding that the Soviet statement of 8 December proposed that offensive systems other than the central ones "be taken into account" in the final agreement, but that it was not necessary to include systems other than the three central ones in a strategic aggregate. In other words, the Soviets seem willing not to make the US acknowledge FBS specifically in setting aggregates, but merely to "take it into account" in an agreement on the central systems by allowing the Soviets a corresponding edge. The problem lies in reconciling this position with the US demand for equal aggregate levels in central systems alone.

6. The US side is seeking clarification of the other Soviet proposals, particularly the extreme one on banning nuclear armed strategic bombers.

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